

Ravalli County Electric Co-op

NE 1051 Eastside Highway
P.O. Box 190
Corvallis, MT 59828-0190

March 15, 2000

Federal Caucus Comment Record
c/o BPA-PL
707 W. Main St., Suite 500
Spokane, WA 99201

Re: Dam Removal Hearing/Salmon Recovery Plans

Dear Sirs:

Ravalli County Electric Cooperative, Inc. is a small member owned system in southwest Montana. Currently we serve 8000 consumers electricity purchased from the Bonneville Power Administration. We have purchased power from BPA for the past 50 plus years and during that time we have contributed our share of the \$3 billion to salmon recovery in the Columbia River System. We remain adamantly opposed to dam removal as a possible means of restoring salmon runs for several reasons.

For over 20 years we have watched competing recovery plans work against each other for a piece of the funding. While this was a great job creation mechanism, it was in direct conflict with actual salmon recovery.

There has never been an established set of goals for recovery. Each competing entity had their own plans for spending the funds with no monitoring for actual results.

Emotion was a driving factor versus good science. An example is tribal rights. As noble as they may be, 150 years (one and a half centuries) have passed since the signing of the original treaties. Times have changed! The population of the northwest has exploded, whether that is good or bad is immaterial; it is, however, a fact of life that has to be factored into the equation. Humans count!

Salmon that fed only a few last century is a main dish today. Technology has improved in many areas, many not in the best interest of the salmon (catch methods).

Salmon have a short life expectancy of seven years, with 90% of that life spent in the ocean, an area that has been virtually unstudied as it relates to salmon survival. Dams may be an obstacle but they are not insurmountable. We can send a man to the moon and back on a finite fuel capsule, replace or repair the human heart, transplant virtually all human organs to extend our life expectancy, surely we can get fish past a dam in either direction.

"Owned by the People We Serve"

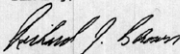
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The Columbia River System, like many rivers around the world, is a lifeline of a given region. Dams have brought prosperity and diversity to many regions including the northwest. The few obstacles that accompany the vast number of benefits are fixable. It will require a common reasonable approach to the issues. We no longer live in 1855 and we cannot continue to act like we do. Solutions will come from reasonable people using the latest in technologies.

We urge you to eliminate the emotional issues surrounding the salmon issue. They serve only to polarize the issues and detract from any meaningful solutions. Use the science that is available to develop a plan with proper monitoring and adjustment stages. Use the technology that is available to bring the plan to fruition. Dam removal will not bring back the salmon; they have gone extinct in many rivers that do not have dams. It will not take a rocket scientist to find a solution, only reasonable people using the science and technology available to them.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Brown
General Manager

cc: Marc Racicot, Governor
Judy Johanson, BPA Administrator
Senator Baucus
Senator Burns
Representative Hill
Bill Drummond
C.T. Beede